



When You Bit...

Adam Fieled

Cover image by Tim Yu
Kate the Great's bookstore, Andersonville, Chicago, 2007
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Preface

I set this particular book, *When You Bit...*, in Chicago, because I visited Chicago several times between 2006 and 2008. 2006 was another pivotal year for me—in many ways, the Philly Free School in its original form effectively ended (Mike Land's 7/29/06 extravaganza at the Highwire being the final Free School show with all the “classic” elements in place), I finished my M.F.A. and began as a University Fellow at Temple, and, most importantly, harnessed all my energy (which hitherto had suffered some dissipation) towards writing and publishing poetry seriously. I hit some open spaces and some walls instantly—*Beams* was published by Blazevox in late 2007, but accepted for publication in October '06; roughly the same time my first poems appeared in *Jacket Magazine*. The walls I hit had to do with the infrastructure of the Philly poetry community. During the Philly Free School years, I was shielded from facing this infrastructure—by a vibrant social nexus, by our multi-media approach, and by my then-scattershot approach to publishing. Now, I found a new world which seemed comparatively bitter, brittle, hard, and cold, and I found it alone (Mike, Nick, Mary, Abby, and the rest had gone their separate ways, at least temporarily).

The Philly poetry world, at high levels and where high-stakes publishing was concerned, was run largely by old money and what could be purchased, which was everything. Two or three tightly constructed and connected cliques ruled the roost, and demanded absolute conformity and forfeit of control for entrance or acceptance. These cliques also frowned on sexualized behavior and artistic work; on attractive looking people in general; and on poets being judged by talent, rather than by strictly reined-in and by-certain-books behavior. This all sounds rather daunting, and it was. But the key figures in these cliques were also, to my way of thinking, hopelessly untalented geeks, bizarre looking, and not particularly taken seriously by anyone outside of Philadelphia. One of their funniest riffs was about talent—in their world, there was no “talent,” and “talent” was a myth created by naïve patriarchal authorities to impose subaltern status on their underlings, etc, etc. They also hated poetry—“it's not the poems, it's the thoughts about the poems.” The net effect of all this *meshigas* is that by late 2006, I had seen a new, waste land version of the city I loved. I was determined and ambitious—I wasn't going to run back to curating Free School shows, and give up the idea of making my name as a poet. I also had some newfangled advantages—the Net, and particularly Blogger, were finding ways to save my ass. But the whole in-love-with-Philly, Free School vibe had turned sour. Philadelphia: a Gemini, to boot.

So, as of late 2006, if I was going to find romance, intoxication, and intrigue, I'd have to look elsewhere. Because, during the course of doing my M.F.A. I had befriended a Chicago-area poet named Steve Halle, it looked like Chicago might be an option. I made arrangements to visit Chicago in December '06—to stay with Steve in the Chicago suburb Palatine where he lived, to read with him at Myopic Books in Wicker Park, Chicago, and in general to commiserate with the Chicago poetry community. My visits to Chicago weren't anywhere near as baroque as the Free School years—moderate drinking and drugging, no carnivorous carnality. But I did find Chicago enchanting, and unique, particularly Wicker Park, which was always our first stop in town. Chicago reminded me of the best bits of New York and D.C. in composite form—the cleanliness of the one, the imposing scale of the other. I liked the fact that being in Chicago (even more than New York) was like being marooned on an island in the middle of America—and that middle America (places like Palatine) was a sight to see. I found life in Palatine like being on the moon.

In short, I found Chicago imaginatively stimulating enough that the weight of dealing with Philadelphia was balanced. The idea for *When You Bit...* began from a small incident which happened at a bar in Andersonville after one of my Chicago readings in mid 2007—a Chicago

poetess picked up my arm and bit it. She and some of her friends became the Muses for *When You Bit...* I decided, early in the game, to employ the sonnet form here— both because the emotions of longing and confinement were being investigated, and because I felt I could take the sonnet form someplace new, towards transgression and (hopefully seductive) perversion. My particular Chicago Muses were two poetesses who seemed to always show up as a Dynamic Duo— as the initial portion of the book would investigate a ménage between a protagonist and the two of them. The middle section of the book would dwell on the protagonist's interiority; and then the final portion of the book would reunite the protagonist with one of the Dynamic Duo. As I mentioned in an interview with *Mipoesias* in '08, the narrative structure of the book is this: 3, 1, 2. The action is set in Chicago, but doesn't necessarily need to be— the real activity is in the protagonist's consciousness, as it and he sift through the vicissitudes and junk-heaps of the flesh to find, hopefully, something genuine. A book I hoped Sir Philip Sidney would appreciate.

Adam Fieled, 2013

I. Sister Lovers

Three Sets of Teeth

Three sets of teeth: who
can check for cavities?
A three-way circuit: who
will start the striptease?
Three lovers in three ways:
how merrily the dance
begins. We spin, we spin,
we forget our instincts,
anima, the part of teeth
that cuts. We are sluts.
There is an "I" here that
stands for all of us, but
its eyes are shut. Sleep
lulls it to rest, not think. Or speak.

A Web, A World, Wide

You and you: more than
acquainted. You stand up
next to each other, knock
back tequila shots, scope
out cowboy belted dudes.
You're well acquainted w
velvet-handed touches,
window-pane lizards. Then
I blow into town, rugged
as a slick-booted rancher,
hard as Japanese math. I
show off rope-length for
your amusement: something's
spun: a web, a world, wide.

Salt Orchard

Oh to be between
two startled deer
on a bus, one bare-
backed, one shut-
eyed, both blue.
Oh exquisite torture.
One's more
mermaid than
deer, salt orchard.
One cannot
get too laid.
I take off my
boots, both say
shoot, shoot.

In the Street

Orgasmic Furniture Cellar.
OFC, bar-back, bare-back,
Guyville. Toast: to circles.
Then stand against a wall
in an alley, paw-slide, drip,
listen to car-screech as we
taste the first spoils tingle.
Couples leave: we laugh,
being more, being three.
Throw down a butt: it's
a red flower dropped, a
filled cup, I'm your butt.
Mouths: scotch-tang, I'm
eating scotch. Let's scoot.

Apartment: Pizza Guy

Apartment: I'm lost.
Here a bed, there a
bed: no everywhere.
Scattered butts hang.
Couch: seat between
two, silk-skirted, red.
Blood on tracks left
on coats, racks, bed-
spreads, cool, kempt.
Vibe: pulsing wants.
Sandwich, mayo me,
white-out, come age.
Hey, you and you: do
I look like a pizza guy?

Big Black Car

Your middle: tongue
(hers), man (me), riding
together, I bitch (middle's
middle). I tongue man
you, her, spacious, it, of
you, all of us, can't feel
a nothing, I can't. Not
of this, of you, of her,
of all of this riding, in
what looks big, black,
has tongue-room. I
can't feel a thing. I feel
nothing of bigness, black
fur interior her you. Ride.

Back of a Car

Asinine, as is, this ass is:
ass I zip down into zero:
anal, a null, a void, this is.
I'm behind a behind that
sits smoking, rubbing, pink-
tipped, tender, butt, button.
She watches me watching as
I go brown-nose in another.
Only *her car-ness*, averted by
eyes to a wall, seems happy.
Only she can stomach rubs
of the kind that want plugs.
Sparked tank, here comes
no come, & aggravation.

Bathtub

Syntactic inversion, when
applied to three lovers, is
a bathtub forced to hold
more than it needs to. I
want to emphasize this:
at no point did I touch
both at once. In fact, if
you take a way a rogue-
red surface, how dismal:
soap, bubbles, razors, &
a bunch of drunken limbs.
Not much ecstasy. Fog in
mirrors meant confusion,
not consummation. Or come.

Charnel Smoke

We're no holy trinity—
our mouths full of glass-
bits stained red, altars set
up to hold limbs heaved
over each other, cement-
thick, drizzled on, wisps
of charnel smoke rising
in clumps of sodden ash.
Resurrection is just more
sex, incarnation guessed
dimly, owing to jolts in
groins groined like earth.
I say “love”, what comes?
Nothing but wine, bodies.

Downs

Round two, night, too:
rubber off, rubber soul,
knee-bounce, they take
turns taking it, & me, in
where shadow-plays go.
Sheets: washed. Pillows:
put up for my head, as
she leans in, hands on
my ass, as bounces her
other, as I am hollow,
as this is a perfect void.
As this is, as things go,
a thing for the Internet.
I am ghosted: house of undoing.

Sunday Morning

Dawn: two down, one up.
I'm a blown-out tire, limp,
scuttling to roadside diners,
sipping coffee alone, both
hungers hung like posters
in chill blood-contours,
sputtered past me, paste.
I took them on in haste,
so close behind me they
lay, laid, lying in wait to
do it all again, leave me
without a pump, means
of being full. I feel dull.
Memento mori means eggs.

Blue Monday

Inside out, upside-down,
round & round. Now it's
cyber, in screen-space, our
dance is, on the Net, it is.
A post posted post-haste.
I'm a cipher, propping up
a pungent myth, academic
feminists might go for. I
sit alone, screened, screams
churning in guts, undone.
Group grope blog bloke,
that's me, player in three,
fuck in words cut too, I
& you two, cut & pasted.

Sunny Afternoon

Wicker Park coffee bar:
I'm stirred, ill-starred, I
sit surrounded. Bounds
the deer, straight into a
headlight: two, bright. I
hang on one more cup,
rapping to a sylph that
hovers above: *save me
from this squeeze*, tracks
on my knee. She stirs
me more. I spoon #2
better, who's on a cell
phone date even as we
speak: *talk to me*. Please.

Grudge-Fucks

This, crazy, water-leakage:
I slip-slide away into you,
out of you, into her, out of
her, we're oil-slicked birds
squawking out minor-key
laments for lost closure. I
hang on the end of clothes-
lines: I'm ten sheets, each
dripped w grease, blood,
butter, milk, a catalogue of
epic grudge-fucks. Not that
anyone has come. Each kiss
is a suicide Jack in a game:
sixty-nine innings. No draw.

Cocaine Gums

I ache: dull, sharp,
in a heap of paper.
All paper: picture,
bright, bold, dark.
I have nailed you
to a piece: black.
I darken touched
things: I'm used.
I write you, you,
you, as if kissed
by a fresh body,
rose-petal bliss.
I drowse: numb
as cocaine gums.

Framed

Nailed, two, across— I
have been glimpsing me
from above, as a camera
would, I am a still, this
is a film, this has to be
framed, no, don't hold,
I can't, it's an offstage
arm, both you & you
speak like I'm (so) not
here, I'm celluloid, I'm
varicose, vein-soft, fake-
bloody, cut, I can't move,
you & you & I minted,
taped, uncensored, dead.

Tuesday

Yesterday don't matter:
it's gone. Now: cut. I'm
aghast. You're there, or,
you're here with me. No
car in sight. Sunset over
Millennium. Big bean is
accomplice. Look at the
big blue water: it's us, &
us alone, together, here,
now, acid-peaking sans
acid. Macro hand-holds.
Micro lip-twists. Simple:
I'm learning it these days.
One on one: game, play.

Gun Shy

How much can I?
Far from gun-shy,
I load, loaded, you.
I did, and you, too.
You and you come.
You took me. You
slicked come to run.
I'm bled, come too.
Awake, shaky, bed:
gun set red to stun.
Get myself ahead.
Get myself my gun.
How much gun for
three in love? None.

Dear Prudence

I nail this down in verse
for one reason: pleasure
is an oasis in a desert of
fruitless labor, that is our
writing-place. This is
as valid as plucking fallen
leaves in a crisp October
dusk. In other words, I
was given cranium, on
many levels, drawn out
into an outpouring, she
made sure, I gasped out
a dying fall, convergence
occurred. Sue me, dear prudence.

Just You

Don't choose two:
I choose you, I do.
I choose to do you,
I choose to be you
in different places,
I am taking you too.
Two is too much, is
too little, is butter to
milk shakes. Makes
sense to choose, it's
the best I can do, I
have no other mood,
moments are you, &
just you, too: just you.

II. Dancing with Myself

Whiskey

I don't think I know anything:
look how the sun sets in March,
a cool night, not dappled, not
glazed, a construction crew in
the street, grinding away at
pavement. These are my worlds,
alone, waiting to be born again
into her, or you, if you want to
read this: streets, walking, cool
like a flaneur around a city I
haven't loved in five years. I
know we'll come together again,
and if we don't I won't be to
blame. Tonight's for whiskey.

Gist

Baudelaire conflated solitude
with multitude. He was wrong.
Or, look how good it can get,
& bad, when you're backed in
to a corner with only work to
prop you up & give you gist.
I'm in love with you, I spit
when I say it cause I feel like
I live in my churned guts, I
look out the window, there's
a street called Race, *ba ba*, I
couldn't be any slower except
if I started popping ludes again.
Once-a-minute heartbeats rend.

Dark Lady

You're more of a Dark Lady
than I have ever hoped for,
especially because when you
betray me, it's with someone
I love: me.

You're more of
everything, actually, & you're
also a pain in the ass. That's
why I haven't let you off the
hook. I'll wind up in my own
hands again tonight, sans
metaphors, like your full
moon in my face, but you'll
never know there's a man in you.

Off

I write best when I have
time to write well, & when
I don't I cook dinner for
myself, its' undercooked, I'm
underfed, as the moon gives
the stars head & I look at a
new skyscraper & remember
other, better times in my life,
who I was then, & yes I feel
myself start to spin like a top.
I have lived, I'm living, & it
only moves in one direction:
on. My "on" is different than
anyone's, it really is. It's off.

Kinky Verbs

We have coffee, we talk.
It's all very matter of-fact,
which is funny because I
sit there with a gargantuan
hard-on, & we start saying
the same things & I want
to reach over the table,
grab you, throttle, shake,
pounce, bite, tear, chew,
lick, all those kinky verbs.
I measure out my life in
Eliot quotes: this moment
can't be forced to its crisis
yet, but I'm no pair of ragged claws.

Kurt Cobain

About Kurt Cobain: I swear
(as I always have, even in high
school) that I don't have a gun,
& when I shoot it won't kill
you (much.) Suicide applies
also to pairs of people who
make one person lying down,
& every two-backed beast
must decide at some point
to live or die. These are the
kind of thoughts you have
on really long nights, when
you find yourself too old
to do drugs. Comfort in sadness?

Palliative

I think of a window-jump:
a bloody corpse, pavement.
The point of no-point, gist
of no-gist, nothing mirrored,
just me dead. Smart to wait,
eh? Smart to see if maybe
something might happen. I
am holed up here, cloistered,
you might say, in this flesh
of my flesh, body I call me.
You may ask how many bets
have been hedged. I choose
(if you ask) not to answer. I
find silence palliative, free.

Crumb

My physical mechanism,
burnt beyond belief, sits
cross-legged on a wooden
chair, writing this out. I'm
listening to the first birds
of spring: urban hymns,
sonnets. Surely birds learn
at some point not to peck
at crumbs in the street, or
maybe not. I am, myself,
a crumb in the street, but
nobody's pecking, not now
anyway, this sixty degree
night, pitched to sub-frenzy.

Accost, accost

Staggering for a cigarette,
a Goon cliché, chez me.
I call your name out over
rooftops in my head: on-
lookers note how my
neck-veins strain, body
tenses, aura turns black-blue.
I am become a late Rothko,
waiting to be placed in a
chapel, where you may glide
by like Keats' Madeline
& I can accost, accost.
I fall, I swell: "thorns
of life" is a neighbor's cell.

Splat!

What greatness thrust upon
me? Solitary Saturday night
fever, jive talking to myself,
doing lines of Advil, falling
off imaginary bridges: splat!
The familiar trope of falling
endlessly, this is how I stay
alive. All because you are, I
affirm, more than a woman,
but, unfortunately, not just
to me, but to many generally.
I suppose I could blazon you:
rhubarb thighs, persimmon
twat, etc, but not productively,
& what would Travolta say?

One Long Mistake

Once I heard a Zen master
say, *my life is one long mistake.*
Well, as I lean into afternoon,
I notice that running errands
doesn't solve anything, & I'm
defeated by my rudeness &
everyone else's too, & I look
forward to a day where I don't
feel taxed to the point of idiocy.
What happened was, I received
an insult in the mail, & threw
the I-Ching & a tough hexagram
came up. My father's son turned
out not to be me, but online, him.

Objective Correlative

Talk about an objective
correlative: I walked into
my bathroom to find a
huge cockroach on its
back beside the toilet,
legs flailing (having just
discovered God's death
in Nietzsche, I'd guess),
but at any rate I killed
the bloody bastard, it
felt good, I felt strong
& thought: wow, to be
God all I have to do is
keep killing: what a buzz!

Deodorant Redolence

Rage is senseless, I rage
in a cloud of senselessness
against the confines of a
first layer of rage against
the confines of a region
of loneliness buttressed
by a feeling that deodorant
is an insult against redolence
that I haven't guts to embrace.
I shower every morning, I
even bathe after I shower,
what this has to do with
anything is beyond me,
except that I like your dirt.

Narrow Alley

I had a spiritual moment,
standing outside Wagon
Train, waiting for a pot of
coffee to brew, consisting
of this: sunlight striking a
brick wall on the far side
of a narrow alley put me
in London talking to Chris
McCabe on a sunny pied
day, not grey: languidness
mixed with desire through.
I leaned against a lamppost,
& this impressed me most:
as spirit goes, nothing moves.

Hyperventilation

Hyperventilation of almost
there: we'll make it yet, on a
dove's wing or any adorable
cliché you can imagine, we'll
make it, & then all this sad
time between will seem like
sheets of sound never heard.
We stand in our own history,
newly made & in the making,
we stand for each other &
for laying down together to
lay down burden's burden,
to make love's love in stereo.
I'm not a saint, you're not a ho.

Time's Arrow

Cigarettes smoke me, I
languish in their mouths.
I am eaten by my dinner,
flushed by my toilet, put
on the shelf by my books.
Time's arrow means that
the next line happened
before this, I am moving,
not crab-like, sideways,
but backwards towards
my birth. If everything
that's to happen between
us already is or was, I can't
whine about being born again.

Lick Butts

I find Philly full of shit.
I find the streets shabby,
the bars tacky, the poets
worse. What's all this if
you're here? Nothing. I
can embrace mediocrities,
lick butts off sidewalks,
piss in alleyways, only for
the joy of being near you.
But I'm still waiting, even
for that, & it's a chilly day, &
I just swallowed a razor, it
tasted like musk of scallops.
I joked when I said I'd lick butts.

Office

This is my office: shit.
Imagination abeyance,
piercing eyes abruptly
withheld like legal pad
documentation of a car
trip around America. I
say, where are you, but
I know exactly where you
are, & how long it will
be before everything can
be spilled into its proper
container. No windows
in here either, an article
tacked to the wall: Jacket.

Stomach Flu

It's like, I have a virus
in my guts that forces
me to puke you up every
time I eat anything tasty.
I puke, shaking through.
I know what I need to do—
stop cigarettes & coffee &
booze & toffee & all things
that seem excremental
when lust for life has gone
rusty. Your increased bust
has made me allergic to
cherry flavored colas, syrups,
brandy, candy fits, & shit.

Tomorrow

In our beginnings are our
ends: tomorrow we meet.
I have called *de profundis*,
you have listened, & now
we're younger than a fete
in Liverpool, July, 1957, a
drunken teenager lighting
up a stage, come on, let's.
More happy love! More
happy, happy love! What's
happiest is the perception
that my eyes are clarified
to/for you, to/for me, &
when we're incarnate, one.

III. Two of Us

Screw

I want you to be like a bull.
I want you to call me a fool.
I want to be ass-proud for you.
I want you to call me to screw.
I know this iambic is dry.
I know this excess has to stop.
I know I can laughably cry.
I know blood can come drop by drop.
I come for you kicking my ass.
I've come to be making a pass.
I've come undistracted by "I".
I killed off my "I" as it's dry.
I start off these lines in the sand.
I want to end up in your hand.

When You Bit...

I knew every Dracula-like whim
I felt every pulse of salt-water
I screwed every screw into wood
I was with you in Atlantis

you were daft, exalted, pinkish
you were drunk on Margaritas
you were dark, pliant, rakish
you were ready to be examined

by my hands, twin detonators
by my tongue, laid on a half-shell
by my teeth, rabid officers
by my torso, raw, wave-flecked

this is not merely afterthought
this is portentous as first-time sparks

Sweat

I'm willing to sweat
to get to you, if you
promise to sweat me
hard as any August.
I exert myself in red
exercises, smeared
lipstick on assets, not
yours, but this is not
what I'm coming to.
I'm coming, not to
get but to come out
and in, in and out of
what we might call love.
I pump you full of lost crickets.

Hips

I didn't have to let
my hands slide down to
your hips, but I did it
to express to you that
gravity works between
us, apples fall from
trees, knowledge lives
in apples, intact or bit.

There is no blush here.
There is only a stemmed
sense of the inevitable.
I am bitten through. I
am waiting for you to peel
"sin" from "skin." Again. Again.

Cake Walk

Am I rough enough
to disperse kinks in
your make-up, hitch
you to a post, make

you wait for my cake?
Waiting can be a bitch
when your sanded skin
still feels scraped, tough.

This could be cake-walk.
Are you too jealous, do
you feel urges to stalk
each stile I walk through?

What you see, you batter.
What you walk on, matters.

Duration

This eclipse: I'm durable
only before, after. Throat
parched, nightingale loud
in my trees, I'm beechen.
I'm green. I send myself
into forests after you, I
skip over streams, being
stone: heavy, jagged, on
top of slugs, worms, dirt.
My heart: too thick, aches.
I don't want beer, I want
to be wound around you.
Deliverance: beds of muck.
It's what I can say you suck.

Empress, Reversed

I can feel how you want to turn
newly colored leaves over, but
not turn over yourself: thusly
avoiding change's busy necessity.
I am a leaf to you, I am openly
veined. I am not to tap but to
paste in a book, frozen in place,
tidy crisp surface, sun-spotted
but easily taken inside. I feel this,
with a sense of being rooted
elsewhere: in ocean, breakers,
crashing only to lash again.
Your creation is an alien.
I call him illegal.

Decreased

Skin is pierced; veins jarred;
quickly interiors come out.
You are decreased by me.
I am decrease made flesh,
piercing you, letting eddies
(preciously stored) free.
To be dead together: death.
Dead things are not scarred;
they drop, decay, stiffen. If
life is soft, this death is hard.
I say “death”, I mean what
compels me to bite you. My
nails: bitten through. What’s
simple to you: out of my eyes.

Mouth Around

I could fly with you
around the universe,
it would be no worse
than a kiss so untrue
it stings like alcohol,
or jellyfish veins, red
& blue, near squalls
of ocean, kept in bed.

If my currents sting, I
must say it's because
I'm a fool, pie-eyed,
with no grasp of laws
that teach our mouths
quiet. I mouth around.

Salmon

To swim up you, relax
into currents, join them
like upstream salmon, I
must forget skinned fins
you ate with relish, stew.
What I get; more head to
head swimming, or back
to back lust purges, screw-
topped horizontal strips.

I am no more and no less
than your zebra, zebra in
transition to fish, striped
to attract water out of you,
to move me softly to blue.

Hay Ride

I do long swings for
you, I am a monkey, I
climb without haste to
a perch of your making.
I am full of tricks, I can
see how you tinge, dye,
fringe, flip things around.
I do not wish to climb
down. I swing between
your legs, everywhere
else, too. You've taught
me what to do. Caught
in a sort of jungle hay-ride,
I eat what meat has died.

Denuded

Just because I remembered
your birthday, you think I
want to blow your candles.
I don't. I want to flick a
wick towards your wax
parts, partly waxing. I
want to pretend this is
a no-icing situation. I
have no scruples. I have
a bunch of holders. I
have a sense of timing
where fire is concerned.
Every match is happy.
Every suit is denuded.

Straw Rut

Well! If I were the twerp
you said I was, how did
the Red Sea part when I
crossed borders into hid
zones, stepped over your
straw rut to find a bed,
wove a winding sheet into
fortune-fucked tapestries?
Not that your head-flips
(matted flaxen vanity) or
self-satisfied, beer-dripped

smirks ever plagued my
flesh, but that you tried.

Severance

I will leave you, presently,
as your lips to me remain
marsh-grass catching dust
from a whirlwind of pain,
bulrushes sans Moses, rust
on the hinge of a trapdoor
used to fool circus-goers
into aping a jealous Moor.
Oh you are elegant, for
you know each sonnet
backwards that was ever
spat, but still you're on it,
the bed, with limbs severed.

Love Poem

You say I'm "out there,"
you're "in here," where
you are, if here's a crab's
shell, a patch of crab-

grass, anything sharp or
snappish. You're closed,
simply. Or, say the war
points us from closure.

Don't wreck composure.
Don't mold me in spite.
Don't do anything, but
open yourself as a door,

that a knob might be used,
"in" & "out" re-confused.

I'm Down

Forest: within it, I'm
field mice, I scamper.
Over still streams I
watch your beechen
green strips fold off.
I hide beneath logs,
consoled by slugs. I
intermix w acorns, I
sharpen my teeth on
pictures of you. I am
down wells. I'm down.
My body is grounded.
I've been pounded by
solitude: thus, I frown.

Stiff Scorpions

This desert is of me: rubies
scattered past stiff scorpions.
Each tail that could've come
up, over small heads, now past
latency into permanent prick.
What's dead is still sharp: do
you dare wrest red rocks from
this heap? Are you scorpionic
too? Have they kicked you out
of encampments for flexing your
tail? These carcasses are wounds
I have given; rocks a secretion of
each short, sharp shock. I have
stung. I go on. Can you come?

Salted Skin

You're way out to sea
when you roll down your
car window, blast songs
written for high school
parking lots. I'm hardly
there. I'm occasional. I
float like an abandoned
raft in the passenger seat,
smoking butts, smoked
by your insistent nerves.
Maybe I glance over to
you, maybe not. Either
way, your salted skin
glistens, reflects, repels.

Sheet Covered

I am ready not for bed,
but for being sheeted,
shuddered over, under,
completed by your head.
This is no thin slice of
what passes for profane
love, gives aches, pains,
and also is sheet-covered.
I mean to say, sheets can
be a kind of metaphor, or
substitute for what plans
we make to cover wars.
I am ten sheets to wind.
I want you to bed me again.

Hooded Eyes

I am alone with alone
tasting dregs, begging
to be let free into red,
where mouths leak rose,

where come-hither glows,
& all the things she said
hover around me singing,
& the ways we were stoned

inhabit us like spirits,
light radiates out of us,
Gods are laughing near us,
not a sale but clearance

to be young, vindicated by
a certain gleam in hooded eyes...

Parts of this book have appeared in Anti Magazine, No Tell Motel, Otoliths, Skicka.

A portion of this book (“Dancing with Myself”) is also available to be listened to on PennSound.

The first edition of the book was released by Otoliths in 2008.

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John Bloomberg-Rissman on “Three Sets of Teeth” from “When You Bit...”: Galatea Resurrects (2012)

I chose this poem for three reasons:

- 1) First poem in the book;
- 2) Since the title of the book is *When you bit ...*, a poem with teeth in the title seemed appropriate;
- 3) I used to know a guy with two sets of teeth. So the title resonated.

The poem's a sonnet; this is a book of sonnets. It's a very musical sonnet. There are end-rhymes, rhymes mid-line, near/off rhymes, and other kinds of musics, too. So it's quite possible to read this poem on a sonic level, which smoothes out the “argument”, so to speak. I'm at the end before you know it. Without realizing I've just passed thru a series of complexities ...

Tho that's not quite true. At one point, the music is quite harshly consonantal, which stops me dead in my tracks: “that cuts. We are sluts.” That initial c ... those following t's ... not to mention the guttural rhyme ... Something is going on here. I should pause over it. So let's go back, a little more slowly this time.

“Three Sets of Teeth. / / Three sets of teeth: who / can check for cavities?” As noted above, when I read this title I thought of the guy with two sets of teeth and wondered whether someone had three. There's nothing in these first two lines to suggest otherwise. In fact, “who / can check for cavities?” had me picturing an incredibly crowded mouth and a really tripped-out dentist. The next two-three lines (remember, this is my 2nd time thru ...) disabuse me that we're talking about one mouth here. Which leaves me puzzling over “who / can check for cavities?” Once I realize that three mouths are involved, the crazed dentist image disappears. Which leaves me with the possibility that we're dealing with a pun on “cavities”, and perhaps the first thoughts of the love-fest to come.

“A three-way circuit: who / will start the striptease?” Erotic tension, with a decision to act upon it. But it is a little nerve-wracking to get these things going. Someone has to unbutton the first button.

“Three lovers in three ways: / how merrily the dance / begins. We spin, we spin,” Apparently the first (and last) buttons are undone and the loving begins. With great joy and pleasure, apparently. “Three lovers in three ways” is an interesting locution; it could indicate any number of things, e.g., the relationships between the three differ; each lover has hir own kinks; the positions (and “cavities”) vary; or it could simply mean that this is a three-way. Or any number of other things, none of which are specified.

“we forget our instincts, / anima, the part of teeth / that cuts.” Uh, oh, trouble in Paradise. I'm not sure exactly what has gone wrong. Has jealousy arisen (is it considered here as an instinct?) Or, if not

jealousy, some other problem?

(I google “anima sex” and google gives me “animal sex”, and “anime sex” which I’m sure – which I have no doubt – are interesting, but they don’t seem particularly apposite here ...).

Anyway.

In Jungian psychology, the anima is the feminine within the male (that little yin dot within the yang). According to Wikipedia,

Jung believed anima development has four distinct levels, which he named *Eve, Helen, Mary and Sophia*. In broad terms, the entire process of anima development in a male is about the male subject opening up to emotionality, and in that way a broader spirituality, by creating a new conscious paradigm that includes intuitive processes, creativity and imagination, and psychic sensitivity towards himself and others where it might not have existed previously.

It seems possible that insufficient development of the anima has rendered some aspect of this three-way problematic. But it’s impossible to tell what has gone wrong, exactly. All we know is that, however wonderful the dance, at a certain point it ends up with

“We are sluts.” I don’t quite know how instinct, anima, and “the part of teeth / that cuts” has led to this conclusion. After all, feeling like a slut is an internalization of culture, not of instinct, etc.

Unless. Unless. Unless there is NO trouble in paradise, and the forgetting of instinct, anima, etc somehow leads one to triumph in one’s sluttishness. Tho I have to admit that I don’t know how that happens, either.

“There is an “I” here that / stands for all of us, but / its eyes are shut. Sleep / lulls it to rest, not think. Or speak.” Is the “I” that stands for all of us the Jungian unconscious? I don’t know, I don’t want to read too much into the single word “anima”. “[A]ll of us” could simply mean the three participants, who have been satisfied into unconsciousness. Unconsciousness that is utterly silent, utterly without need for self-expression, dead to the world, inside and out. That’s one hell of a fine satisfaction.

The depth of the sleep leads me to favor the interpretation of the sluts bit given two paragraphs above. But somehow the fact that the “shut” eyes have to do with “cuts” and “sluts” still troubles me, since I don’t have a solid reading of that bit. Perhaps it’s not an either/or; it could be a both/and.

